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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 001119

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DEPARTMENT PASS TO AID/OTI (RPORTER)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/24/2029  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [VE](#)  
SUBJECT: GBRV ISSUES ARREST WARRANT FOR FORMER ARAGUA  
GOVERNOR

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Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR ROBIN D. MEYER,  
FOR REASON 1.4(D)

¶1. (C) Summary: The Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (GBRV) issued an arrest warrant and asked Interpol for a capture order August 24 for the former Governor of Aragua State, Didalco Bolivar, on corruption charges. Bolivar, who is the Deputy Secretary General of the opposition Podemos party, had fled to Peru and submitted a political asylum request two days prior. Lima has not yet indicated how it will rule, but Chavistas have been quick to link Bolivar's petition to the asylum granted by Peru to exiled opposition leader Manuel Rosales in April. It is unclear why the GBRV has chosen to target Bolivar, but his status as a Chavista-turned-opponent and vocal support of the United States may have contributed to his selection. End Summary.

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BOLIVAR SEEKS ASYLUM IN LIMA  
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¶2. (SBU) A court in Aragua State issued an arrest warrant August 24 for Bolivar on charges that he is linked to purported irregularities in the 2004 adjudication of the purchasing of medical equipment and ambulances while he was Governor. Bolivar did not attend a court-ordered arraignment in July, but his legal team argues that the state never opened a formal criminal trial against him. The arrest order also allows for the seizure of his goods, furniture, and real estate. Police searched Bolivar's house in Maracay on August 4 and 11, allegedly removing sculptures, clothing, electronic devices, and artwork. The court also submitted a solicitation to Interpol asking for a capture order for Bolivar.

¶3. (SBU) Bolivar submitted his petition for asylum in Peru on August 22. His lawyer, Walter Gutierrez, announced that the Peruvian Government would begin considering Bolivar's petition for political asylum in the next few days and he predicted that they would have a response within 10 to 15 days given the urgency of the case. PSUV Governor of Aragua State Rafael Isea announced August 24 that he would call for the confiscation of all of his predecessor's belongings as a means to compensate for "damages that occurred during his tenure." Isea added that Bolivar was a "coward" for seeking political asylum in Peru, which he called a "protector of delinquents" for granting asylum to several members of Venezuela's political opposition, including former Maracaibo Mayor Manuel Rosales.

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MARACAY AMERICAN CORNER  
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¶4. (C) This case is particularly noteworthy because shortly following Isea's November 2008 election, his government effectively seized an American Corner that was in Maracay, the capital city of Aragua State. Bolivar had inaugurated the corner during his gubernatorial tenure with very public, pro-US fanfare, inviting some 200 guests to the event and overseeing a commemoration of John F. Kennedy and his wife -- for which the center is named. In a pointed display of anti-Americanism, however, the incoming Isea government replaced the corner's coordinator with a non-English-speaker in violation of the corner MOU and removed all US paraphernalia, including pictures of JFK and an American flag. When a PAS officer went to Maracay earlier this year to negotiate the return of the corner's resources, he found the Embassy-supplied books in a bathroom. The corner's coordinator met with the officer but has, to date, refused to return any of the US-donated materials.

¶5. (C) Comment: While we are unable to make a judgment on the charges against Bolivar, this is at best a selective prosecution, by a typically lethargic judiciary. The campaign against him suggests that this is a case of political retribution, as Bolivar was reportedly a one-time close ally of and successfully campaign manager for Chavez. Given these severed ties, Bolivar's warm welcome to Ambassador Duddy during the American Center's inauguration may have rankled Chavez. In the past, Chavez has not borne dissent well among his erstwhile supporters, and Podemos officials made themselves the enemies of the GBRV after their decision not to join the newly-formed PSUV in 2007. End Comment.

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